

English Learner FAQ: Section Topics

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Note: This guidance only applies to the 2020-2021 school year and may include updates to guidance provided in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures during the 2019-2020 school year.

English Learner Program Services

1. What actions should be taken if a teacher who was on the LEA's 2019-2020 bilingual education exception or ESL waiver is unable to complete the appropriate certification during the 2019-2020 school year?

Teachers who were placed on the LEA's 2019-2020 bilingual education exception or ESL waiver submitted to the State by November 1st, 2019 have until the 2020-2021 bilingual education/ESL waiver deadline (November 1st, 2020) to complete the necessary certification requirements.

If a teacher has any unforeseen circumstances that prevent him/her from completing certification requirements in the appropriate timeframe (i.e. testing center closures due to COVID-19, personal or family medical circumstances, multiple failed assessment attempts, etc.), the LEA can

- document the reasons for which the teacher was unable to complete certification requirements during the given timeframe,
- establish and document a plan for expedited completion, and
- add the teacher to the 2020-2021 bilingual education exception/ESL waiver as necessary.

It is up to the LEA to determine the validity of the teacher's efforts to obtain the appropriate certification within the expected timeline. It is important to note that bilingual education exceptions and ESL waivers should only be submitted based on State certification requirements for [bilingual education programs](#) and [ESL programs](#). An LEA may establish expectations that go above and beyond these requirements.

Reminder: Teachers who hold the necessary bilingual education or ESL **Probationary** or **Intern** certificate or for whom an **Emergency Permit** has been obtained (by the LEA) are appropriately certified and should NOT be added to the respective bilingual education exception or ESL Waiver. This includes teachers who have received an Intern or Probationary certificate under the conditions of the Governor's waivers related to the declaration of emergency (WINT or WPRO) and those for whom the Emergency Permit has been renewed for the 2020-2021 school year. For more information, please see the *Intern and Emergency Certification Waiver FAQ* on the [TEA COVID-19 Support: Texas Educators](#) webpage.

LPAC Procedures – General

1. What are the priority LPAC duties for the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year?

Priority LPAC duties at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year include the following:

- Identification of potential English learners within the first **four calendar weeks** of the students' enrollment.
- Completion of the **extended timeline** for determining English learner reclassification through the first **30 calendar days** of the 2020-2021 school year.
 - The extended timeline for the first 30 calendar days begins when the LEA resumes school for all students for the 2020-2021 school year.
 - If the LEA is unable to complete the reclassification process within the extended timeline in the fall, the LPAC documents the reasons for which the timeline was extended, including the plan for completing the process in a timely manner.
 - If feasible and allowable per public health facts, the LEA may choose to continue the English learner reclassification process during the summer, prior to the start of the 2020-2021 school year, as needed.
- Communication to parents/guardians on English learner progress and continued program participation decisions within the first **30 calendar days** of the 2020-2021 school year.

The [LPAC End-of-Year Guidance Checklist](#) provides details on closing out the 2019-2020 school year LPAC duties at the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

2. What continued adjustments to the LPAC responsibilities are available during the 2020-2021 school year?

The LPAC may use the following provisions:

- **Alternative meeting methods**, such as
 - Phone or video conferencing
 - Use of electronic signatures that adhere with LEA policy
- **Optional LPAC parent representation** (although highly encouraged)

LPAC Procedures – English Learner Identification and Placement

1. **With potential for on-campus and remote learning during the 2020-2021 school year, are LPACs required to complete the English learner identification process within the required four calendar weeks of a student's initial enrollment in Texas public schools?**

As with other circumstances beyond the LEA's control, the LPAC attempts to complete the English learner identification process within the **four calendar weeks** requirement, as feasible, and documents in the student's permanent record the reasons for which the timeline was extended. Important notes:

- The English learner identification assessment ([preLAS/LAS Links](#)) cannot be administered virtually. Any virtual assessments given are invalid and cannot be used for identification of English learners.
 - If a student is assessed for English proficiency prior to a period of school closure, the LPAC may meet through alternative meeting methods (phone or video conference) in order to complete the identification.
 - The participation of the LPAC parent is optional.
 - If the student is identified by the LPAC, the student's parent is notified of identification, and parental approval may be obtained in writing or through an email or documented phone conversation.
 - The summer or intermittent breaks (holidays, planned or unplanned periods of closure, etc.) can be used to complete the identification process, per local health regulations. Calendar days during intermittent breaks within the school year are included in the required timeframe of **four calendar weeks** for identification.
 - No special form is needed for documenting reasons for delayed identification.
 - For students transferring from other Texas public schools, previous LPAC identification documentation should be obtained and utilized to continue program services.
2. **Can a student be placed in a bilingual education or ESL program while English learner identification is pending?**

Yes. Generally, TAC 89.1220 (j) allows for identified English learners who are awaiting parental approval to be temporarily placed in a bilingual education or ESL program. During periods of school closures or intermittent breaks due to the coronavirus pandemic, LEAs may similarly provide temporary instructional support for potential English learners to ensure prompt access to program services when the identification process is delayed.

- Potential English learners include those for whom the Home Language Survey indicates a language other than English is used either in the home or by the student most of the time, but the identification assessment has not yet been administered.
- Additional anecdotal data may be collected on the potential English learner to determine instructional supports, such as informal analysis of English proficiency using the [ELPS Proficiency Level Descriptors](#), educational history from student and/or family interview/survey, analysis of previous school records from another state or country, etc.
- A student cannot be formally placed in program services (by indicating in TSDS – PEIMS) and cannot generate Bilingual Education Allotment (BEA) funds as an English learner until he/she has been identified as an English learner by the LPAC and parental

approval for program services has been received. Funding for program participation as an English learner begins on the date of parental approval for program services.

3. If a student's prekindergarten placement is dependent upon English learner eligibility, can the student be placed in prekindergarten while English learner identification is pending?

Yes. If the student does not meet any other [prekindergarten eligibility criteria](#), the student may temporarily participate in prekindergarten until English learner identification is completed. Parents/families must be informed that continued prekindergarten participation is pending based on English learner eligibility. Please see the *Early Childhood Education Guidance FAQ* on the [TEA COVID-19 Support: Academics](#) webpage for more information and updates. Virtual administration of [PreLAS](#) assessments are not permissible for English learner identification.

LPAC Procedures – 2019-2020 English Learner Reclassification

1. Can an LEA choose not to reclassify any of their English learners for the 2019-2020 school year?

No. The LPAC must consider English learners' individual readiness for reclassification. Additionally, the LPAC cannot make statements that would indicate a refusal to reclassify any of their English learners. It is important that English learners are provided the opportunity to demonstrate language proficiency, **particularly those who have demonstrated a potential for reclassification**. These students include those for whom the LPAC and/or classroom teachers have documented readiness for successful participation in grade-level content instruction delivered without second language acquisition supports.

2. What if a student was unable to complete all four domains of the 2019-2020 TELPAS?

The English Language Proficiency Assessment component of the reclassification criteria cannot be fulfilled with partial TELPAS data. If all four domains of the 2019-2020 TELPAS were not completed, the LEA may administer the [LAS Links Assessment](#) only to English learners **who have demonstrated a potential for reclassification** with an extended testing window through the first **30 calendar days** of the 2020-2021 school year

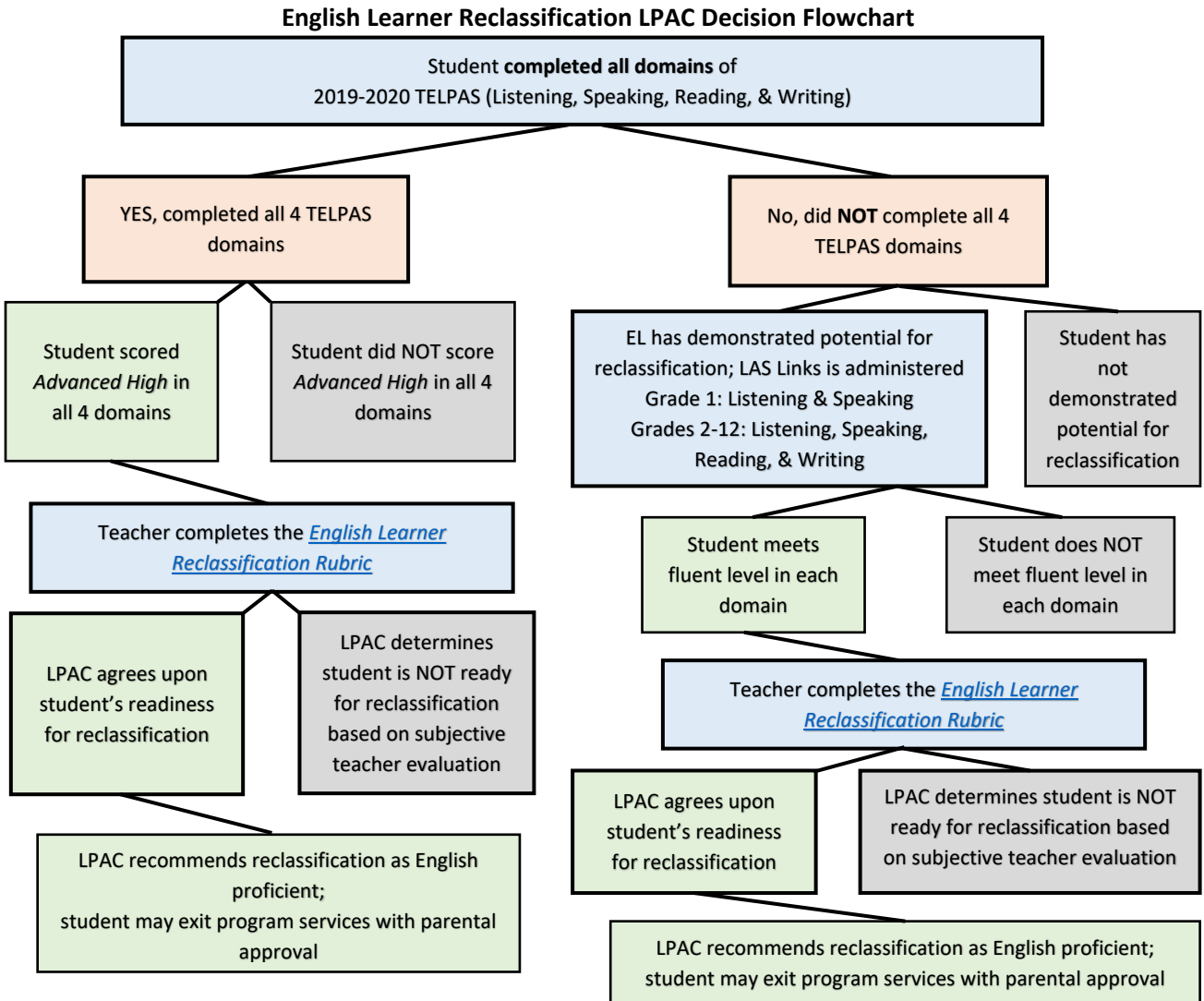
- Grade 1: Listening and Speaking:
- Grades 2-12: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

It is important to note that TELPAS and LAS Links scores cannot be combined to meet [reclassification criteria](#). Also, if the LAS Links assessment is used at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year to determine reclassification from the previous year, the student should be assessed with the grade level assessment for which the student was enrolled in the 2019-2020 school year.

3. How is 2019-2020 English learner reclassification criteria determined?

The *English Learner Reclassification LPAC Decision Flowchart* below (next page) guides LEAs on how to determine 2019-2020 English Learner reclassification criteria for students in grades 1-12. The LPAC process for determining English learner reclassification, generally completed

at the end of the school year, has been extended through the first **30 calendar days** of the 2020-2021 school year.



4. Can students within the same LEA have different 2019-2020 EL reclassification criteria based on their situation?

Yes. The LEA must develop a consistent district-wide plan for determining reclassification criteria for English learners. This plan **may include differences in reclassification criteria for some students based on individual situations**. For example, if in a single grade level at a campus, half of the students completed all four domains of TELPAS prior to school closure, and half of the students in the same grade level did not, the students with completed TELPAS will use TELPAS, and those that did not may need to default to LAS Links. Keep in mind that LAS Links would only then be administered to those who have demonstrated a potential for reclassification and were unable to complete all four domains of TELPAS. Another reason for differences in reclassification criteria among student groups could be due to differences in feasibility for completing TELPAS prior to the extended TELPAS window in the spring. For

example, the completion of holistic ratings for grade 1 may have been more feasible than online testing and writing sample collections in grades 2-12.

The LEA's plan for reclassification criteria should be based on the individual student's situation. If a student has completed all four domains of TELPAS, he or she should NOT take LAS Links because other students did not complete TELPAS. Over-assessment of students is not a recommended practice. Providing the option to use LAS Links is only available to ensure that students who are being considered for reclassification have access to demonstrate English proficiency when TELPAS cannot be completed in all four domains. Keep in mind that TELPAS and LAS Links scores cannot be combined. The [Revised English Learner Reclassification Chart](#) provides the specific levels needed for meeting reclassification criteria using either assessment.

5. What assistance is provided to LEAs who opt to use the LAS Links Assessment for 2019-2020 EL reclassification?

LEAs can score the assessments for reclassification locally, or DRC can complete the scoring for a fee. If LEAs choose to have DRC score the assessments for reclassification, their local funds or Bilingual Education Allotment (BEA) funds can be used. Additionally, only for the 2019-2020 school year, the LEA can use Title III, Part A-ELA funds for DRC scoring of the LAS Links assessment used for reclassification. Please visit the Texas-dedicated [LAS Links website](#) for information on scoring by DRC.